



SOMEBODY HERE NEEDS YOU.

TO: Rep. Kurt Heise, Chair, Criminal Justice Committee and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee

FROM: Ann M. Griffin, Esq., Special Projects Manager, Michigan Humane Society

RE: Public Testimony on HB 4478

DATE: May 19, 2015

The Michigan Humane Society is testifying in support of HB 4478.

The Michigan Humane Society (MHS) thanks Rep. Robert Kosowski for introducing HB 4478. MHS also thanks the Criminal Justice Committee for taking testimony regarding HB 4478 and for allowing MHS to share the following information in support of its position.

MHS is the largest and oldest animal welfare organization in the state. MHS works to end companion animal homelessness, provide the highest quality service and compassion to the animals entrusted to our care, and to be a leader in promoting humane values. MHS is a private, nonprofit organization and is not affiliated with any national humane organizations nor any local or regional humane societies or SPCAs.

There is a link between human violence and animal abuse.

Decades of research have substantiated the connection between animal abuse and human violence. Serious academic research that produced well-documented and reliable studies regarding what came to be known simply as "The Link"® started in the mid-twentieth century. The statistics resulting from this research are sobering. The following are just a few examples:

- People who have been convicted of some of the most heinous crimes against humans also had a history of violent or cruel treatment of animals, including David Berkowitz (the "Son of Sam," who shot his neighbor's dog), Jeffery Dahmer (who killed neighbors' pets), and Albert DeSalvo (the "Boston Strangler," who trapped dogs and cats in boxes and shot them with arrows).
- A study conducted in 1983 revealed that "[a] survey of pet-owning families with substantiated child abuse and neglect found that animals were abused in 88 percent of homes where child physical abuse was present."

- A 1998 study indicated that “71 percent of [women seeking shelter at a safe house] having pets affirmed that their partner had threatened, hurt or killed their companion animals, and 32 percent of mothers reported that their children had hurt or killed their pets.”
- Pioneering research at domestic violence shelters conducted by Professor Frank Ascione showed that between 18 and 48 percent of pet-owning women at the shelters had delayed leaving their abusers for fear of what would happen to their pets.

MHS has first-hand experience with domestic violence victims concerned about their pets.

Sadly, there have been a number of instances over the years where domestic violence victims have approached MHS about surrendering or euthanizing their pets because they were afraid that something far worse would happen to their pets if they were left with an abuser.

HB 4478 would protect both people and animals in Michigan.

It is estimated that in the U.S., humans share their homes with 70-80 million dogs and 74-96 million cats. Almost half of all households in the United States have a dog, and about a third have a cat. A Harris poll revealed that more than 9 out of 10 pet owners surveyed said that they considered their pets to be family members. Abusers understand the strong feelings their victims have for their pets, and they will often threaten, abuse, or even kill pets in order to control their victims.

Allowing victims of domestic violence to include their animals in personal protection orders (PPOs) will protect both humans and the animals they love. By the end of 2014, 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico had all enacted legislation to allow the inclusion of pets in PPOs.

MHS respectfully requests that the Criminal Justice Committee vote in favor of HB 4478, which would take Michigan one step closer to joining the growing list of states that provide better protection for people and animals by allowing animals to be included in PPOs.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.